



Optimist International Oratorical Contest

Dakotas-Minnesota-Manitoba (DMM) District

“The Moment I Realized I Belonged – My Definition of Community”

Who: The contest is open to contestants **under the age of 19** as of **October 1st** of the current DMM District fiscal year (10/01/25 to 9/30/26) and who have not yet completed secondary school or its equivalent, including CEGEP students in Québec, CA. **There is no minimum age.**

What: The Optimist Oratorical Contest gives youngsters the chance to speak to the world. More than \$150,000 in education scholarships funded by the OI Foundation is awarded annually from this program. This year’s Oratorical topic is: **“The Moment I Realized I Belonged – My Definition of Community.”**

Why is this important?

The Oratorical Contest is a simple but spectacular way to get younger students involved in public speaking and prepare them for higher level Oratorical competitions. These contests encourage students to develop speaking skills and prepare them for the future.

Dates/Deadlines:

All **entry requirements** must be submitted to the DMM Oratorical Chair via email by the **deadline** for consideration. The details are:

- **Deadline:** **Friday, April 17, 2026** (extensions must be prearranged)
- **Zone/Regional Contests:** Dates determined by DMM Oratorical Chair if required based on number of club participants.
- **District Contest:** **May 1st, 2026**. Winner submissions due to Optimist International by the DMM Oratorical Chair by **May 16th, 2026**.
- **World Oratorical Championships 2026:** **July 17-18, 2026** in St. Louis, Missouri
- **Important:** Please review all **submission requirements** for student contestants below

District Contest Entry Requirements:

Club Contest Coordinators or Chairs should submit by the deadline for club qualifying District Contestants. Please send via email, with the subject line **DMM Oratorical Entry - Your Club Name**. Please attach all required materials in an email or drive (.zip, Google, Dropbox etc.) and ensure all attachments are clearly labeled by file name.

1. Copy of Contest Application
2. Copy of District Entry Form
3. Copy of Speech (**Important: MS Word, please no PDF**)
4. Statement of Age Verification performed by Club Contest Chair or Coordinator

NOTE: District Winner will need to be able to provide copy of ID for Age Verification **State/Province ID, Birth Certificate or Passport**

DMM District Contest Contact Information

- **District Chair:** Linnea Solem (Optimist Club of St. Paul) | email: linneasolem@comcast.net | phone: **612-787-8994**
- **Questions:** Email, Text or Call Linnea, for quicker replies text is best!



District Contest Details - What you need to know

Below are step by step details for the 2025-26 DMM Oratorical Contest. Please contact DMM Chair **Linnea Solem** (contact info above) with any questions or support needed.

Step #1: How to get started:

A [Club Chair Planning Guide](#) is posted on the DMM and OI website with useful materials to help get the club started. The guide includes all materials, checklists, forms, and worksheets including tasks broken down by role and project timelines. The guide includes the scoring sheets used by judges and timekeepers. Included in the guide are the required forms to submit contestants to the District. **If you're new, Linnea Solem is available to coach you!**

NOTE: THE OI Club Planning guide has not been updated to remove the Student Evaluation Form. It is not required for submission to the District.

Step #2: Club Contest:

Plan & schedule your Club Contest to maximize participation. The best practice is to avoid Spring Break (do your homework) and aim for after school, early evening or Saturday morning when students are most available. **Club Contests should allow 1-2 weeks to prepare for a Zone Contest. Should your region have no Zone, you have more flexibility. For those with Zone Contests, Target 3/27/26 or 4/03/26 as a deadline (but avoid your Spring Break & religious holidays!)**

Step #3: Zone Contest:

Should your region have 3+ Clubs competing, a Zone Contest will be needed to determine your two District Contest delegates. If your Zone had 2 or less, you may fast track two contestants directly to the District Contest. **Zone Contest dates should allow 1-2 weeks to collect Contestant requirements before 4/17/26 District due date. Target 4/10/26 or 4/15/26 as a deadline.**

Should your Contestant(s) qualify for the DMM District Contest you'll need to submit all documentation by Friday, April 17th, 2026 (extensions must be prearranged).

Step #4: District Contest:

The District Contest will be a **LIVE** contest at the DMM Q3 Convention on **May 1-2 2026**, in Watertown, SD. Accommodations will be made for **Canadian** students who are not able to obtain passport/travel requirements ahead of time. For any **virtual contestants**, accommodation will include judges viewing all speeches from a separate room (e.g., Zoom) to ensure full contest parity.

- Date: May 1-2, 2026
- Location: [AmericInn/Watertown Event Center](#)
- Address: 1901 9th Ave SW, Watertown, SD 57201 | Reservations: 1-800-634-3444
- Rooms: \$109.99/night + tax (DMM Optimist Room Block) until **4/01/26**
- Some Clubs choose to subsidize hotel and gas mileage for Contestants

Questions:

Send **Linnea Solem** your comments, questions or concerns promptly. I'll start a **FAQ** list and share updates via email and to the DMM Facebook Page. I appreciate you all, cheers to a great Oratorical Contest!



Linnea Solem

Linnea Solem- DMM Oratorical Chair

Optimist Club of St. Paul | P: 612-787-8994 | E: Linneasolem@comcast.net